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ON PAGE A-1

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2 Ex-CIA Agents Sought by FBI As Possible Spies

By Patrick E. Tyler
Washington Post Staff Writer

The FBI said last night it has issued an arrest warrant for a former CIA officer, apparently identified as a Soviet spy by Vitaly Yurchenko, a high-ranking Soviet intelligence officer who defected two months ago. Informed sources said the FBI has identified a second CIA officer, apparently named by Yurchenko, but has not yet taken action against him.

Yurchenko is being debriefed under tight security near Washington, a congressional source said yesterday.

The suspect being actively sought by the FBI is Edward Lee Howard, 33, who fled his home outside Santa Fe, N.M., two weeks ago after FBI agents questioned his employer.

Agents quickly searched his home and car under a warrant saying the government sought coding equipment and espionage paraphernalia. The Federal Bureau of Investigation said Howard is charged with conspiracy to deliver national defense information to a foreign government.

A federal official said yesterday that the second former Central Intelligence Agency officer has not fled the United States, but he would not comment on whether efforts are being made to place the man under surveillance or arrest.

A congressional source also suggested that a separate international search may be under way for several other former CIA operatives possibly identified as Soviet agents by Yurchenko, a former Soviet KGB officer.

The FBI was closely guarding information about the investigation yesterday. The agency even asked the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence not to issue a statement about the investigation after intelligence officials briefed senators, another official said.

Committee Vice Chairman Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.) was described by one source as very disturbed that information had leaked about the CIA debriefing of Yurchenko before law enforcement officials had time to investigate Yurchenko's disclosures. After the intelligence committee briefing yesterday, a panel spokesman declined to say whether the search for Howard results directly from information given by Yurchenko. He would say only, "We were contacted last week by the FBI that they were conducting an active investigation of [Howard]."

The profile emerging of Howard yesterday was that of an Air Force officer's son, a private economic analyst working for New Mexico's state Legislature and a former Peace Corps volunteer.

Howard, who had worked for the Agency for International Development in Lima, Peru, from 1976 to 1979, turned down a posting to Moscow and returned to his native New Mexico in 1983.

The FBI said Howard worked for the CIA from January 1981 to June 1983 under diplomatic cover in the State Department.

According to Santa Fe court records, he pleaded guilty last year to assault with a deadly weapon and was sentenced to five years' probation after being arrested for scuffling with three men in February.

Police reports said Howard fired a .44 Magnum pistol through the roof of a car during the altercation. The FBI said he is also wanted for unlawful flight while on probation.

Phil Baca, Howard's superior on the New Mexico Legislature's Finance Committee, described him as "a hard worker [who] did a good job for us."

EDWARD LEE HOWARD
... subject of FBI investigation

Baca said he was interviewed by FBI agents Sept. 19 and, although he declined to disclose the nature of the questions, said he was not surprised when, on Sept. 23, he found Howard's resignation letter on his desk. The federal warrant was issued that day.

The Associated Press reported that reporters at Howard's home in a Santa Fe suburb late Tuesday found a search warrant on the driver's seat of his car. According to the warrant, the AP said, federal officials were seeking coded pads, microdots attached to business cards, recording and transmitting equipment, and telephone and travel records.

While disclosures that CIA employes may have been feeding information to the Soviets have alarmed U.S. intelligence officials, several of the officials said Yurchenko's defection and those of other Soviet intelligence officials in London and Athens represent a major disaster for Soviet intelligence.

"[The KGB] has been hit with an earthquake that's above 8.0 on the Richter scale, and we've been hit with a few hail stones," said George A. Carver, a 26-year CIA veteran who left the agency during the Carter administration.

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Other officials said it is far from clear which superpower has suffered the greatest hemorrhaging of sensitive information.

Some intelligence experts suggested that, while Yurchenko's defection may be a short-term CIA bonanza, the loss of Yurchenko and other recent Soviet defectors to the West actually represents setbacks for the West, since they can no longer be used as "moles" inside the Soviet intelligence establishment.

Counterintelligence experts also cautioned that it will take time to check and cross-check information provided by the defectors before it is deemed reliable.

Staff writers T.R. Reid, Mary Thornton and Loretta Tofani contributed to this report.

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